

**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
**Washington, DC 20515-0512**

August 24, 2021

President Joseph R. Biden, Jr.  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Biden:

As the security situation unfolds in Afghanistan, we are gravely concerned for the safety of tens of thousands of Afghan women and other vulnerable populations, who for the past twenty years have served their country as educators, lawmakers and civil servants, activists, journalists, judicial workers, and human rights defenders, only to have their lives, liberty, and livelihoods threatened by the Taliban.

Over the past two decades, Afghan women heeded America's call to help advance democratic values at great personal risk. In recent years, a rising number of Afghan women have been targeted for their participation in public life, including in a wave of targeted killings of high-profile female leaders and in the horrifying attack in May on the Sayed Ul-Shuhada school in Kabul in which militants deliberately targeted and killed over 70 of the school's female students. We are deeply concerned that the number of women killed in Afghanistan, a figure that more than doubled between 2012 and 2020, will severely increase as the Taliban gains influence.

Approximately 63 percent of Afghanistan's population is below the age of 25, and most of Afghanistan's population was born after the fall of the Taliban. The majority of Afghan women have never experienced firsthand the brutal restrictions on women's rights under Taliban rule. The Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission confirmed that in several provinces under Taliban control last month, including Faryab, Kunduz, Badakhshan, and Takhar, the Taliban have severely restricted girls' education, and prohibited women from leaving the home uncovered or without a male guardian and from accessing healthcare services without a male guardian. Taliban fighters have reportedly beat women for keeping their faces uncovered in public. In at least one province, media reports confirmed the forced marriage of women and girls as young as 15 to Taliban fighters – a widely-acknowledged form of sexual violence.

We fear that with the fall of the Afghan government, the Taliban will continue to target women who have advocated for human rights or participated in public life outside the home. We are particularly concerned with reports that Taliban militants are going door-to-door and compiling lists of activists and civil servants – including prominent women leaders, journalists, and human rights defenders.

We are encouraged that your administration is executing plans to evacuate U.S. citizens, lawful permanent residents, and as many as 22,000 special visa applicants and their families via Operation Allies Refuge and that the U.S. military is preparing the operational capacity to airlift 5,000 to 9,000 people out of Afghanistan daily. However, more must be done for Afghan women who fear for their lives under Taliban rule. Given the urgent threat to these women, we urge your administration to immediately evacuate women educators, lawmakers, civil servants, activists, journalists, judicial workers, health care workers, human rights defenders, and other at-risk populations regardless of immigration status or travel documentation. Fortunately, there is a historical precedent for a large-scale evacuation effort. The governor of Guam—where 7000 Kurds who faced persecution in Iraq were airlifted in the 1990s under Operation PACIFIC HAVEN—has indicated that Guam is ready to help again. Other countries have also offered to house Afghan refugees as they await visa processing.

Specifically, we respectfully urge you to:

- (1) Provide humanitarian parole and evacuation services to the United States for vulnerable women and provide access to the critical supports available to refugees;
- (2) Work with regional partners to establish Emergency Transit Centers to aid in the rapid evacuation of at-risk populations;
- (3) Expand the existing P-2 designation to include women who face severe persecution in Afghanistan due to their advocacy, occupation, or public life, and direct diplomatic officials to prioritize Afghan women for Priority 1 referrals; and
- (4) Leverage the full diplomatic weight of the U.S. government in any negotiations with the Taliban to secure safe passage from Kabul to the airport for women fleeing the Taliban.

Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter, and we look forward to your timely response.

Sincerely,



Jackie Speier  
Member of Congress



Ted Lieu  
Member of Congress



Mikie Sherrill  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Brenda L. Lawrence  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Veronica Escobar  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Lois Frankel  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Sylvia R. Garcia  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Colin Allred  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Nanette Diaz Barragán  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Karen Bass  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Earl Blumenauer  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Suzanne Bonamici  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Jamaal Bowman, Ed.D  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Julia Brownley  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Judy Chu  
Member of Congress

/s/  
David N. Cicilline  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Katherine M. Clark  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Emanuel Cleaver, II  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Steve Cohen  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Bonnie Watson Coleman  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Gerald E. Connolly  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Jim Costa  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Madeleine Dean  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Mark DeSaulnier  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Ted Deutch  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Debbie Dingell  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Anna G. Eshoo  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Adriano Espaillat  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Teresa Leger Fernández  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Al Green  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Jared Huffman  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Pramila Jayapal  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Eddie Bernice Johnson  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Henry C. “Hank” Johnson Jr.  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Mondaire Jones  
Member of Congress

/s/  
William R. Keating  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Ro Khanna  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Daniel T. Kildee  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Raja Krishnamoorthi  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Ann McLane Kuster  
Member of Congress

/s/  
John B. Larson  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Al Lawson  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Barbara Lee  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Andy Levin  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Carolyn B. Maloney  
Member of Congress

/s/  
James P. McGovern  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Seth Moulton  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Joe Neguse  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Eleanor Holmes Norton  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Ilhan Omar  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Chellie Pingree  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Mark Pocan  
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/s/  
Ayanna Pressley  
Member of Congress

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Jamie Raskin  
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Lucille Roybal-Allard  
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Linda T. Sánchez  
Member of Congress

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Jan Schakowsky  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Terri A. Sewell  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Mike Thompson  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Dina Titus  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Rashida Tlaib  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Maxine Waters  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Peter Welch  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Nikema Williams  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Frederica S. Wilson  
Member of Congress

/s/  
John Yarmuth  
Member of Congress